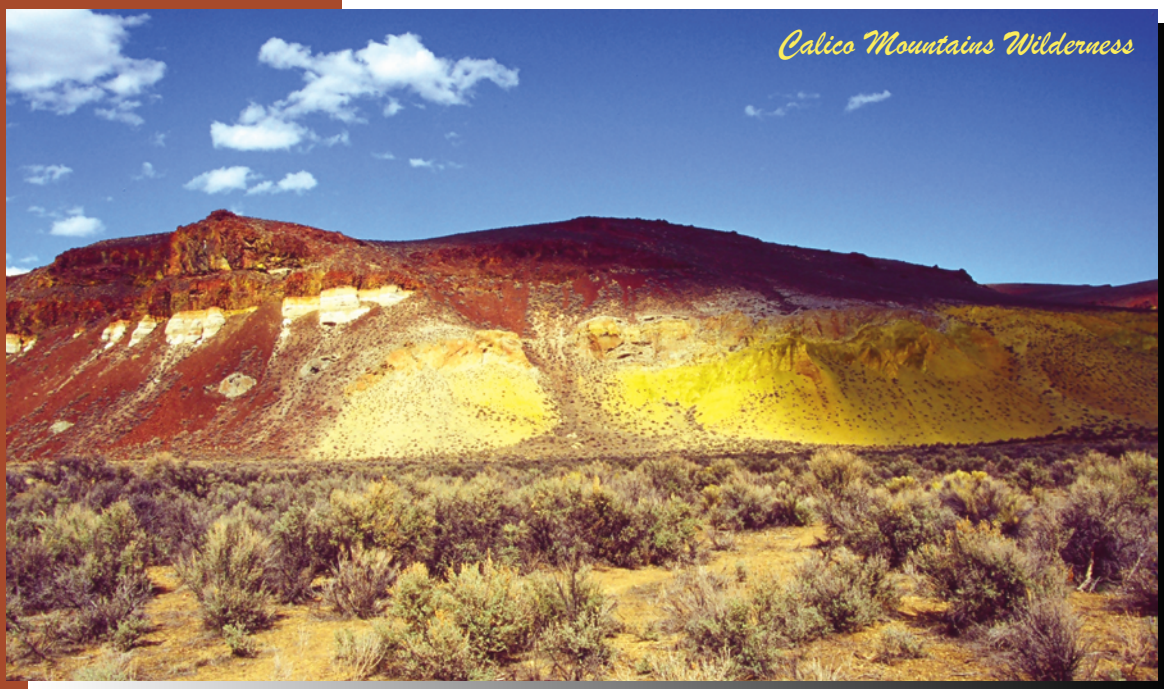

Chapter 9:

Proposed RMP Implementation

BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

BLACK ROCK DESERT
HIGH ROCK CANYON
EMIGRANT TRAILS

NATIONAL CONSERVATION AREA

Chapter 9: Proposed RMP Implementation

9.1 INTRODUCTION

The Proposed RMP alternative would provide broad direction to meet the resource and visitor requirements of the NCA Act and the objectives established during the RMP process. Implementation of a land use plan involves completion of many tasks. Some these tasks are completed when the plan is adopted, while others continue over the 20-year life of the plan. This section is intended to provide a framework to guide implementation of planning decisions from the PRMP and future actions that could occur as a result of this plan. Implementation of future actions often requires additional fine-scale planning to implement the broad guidance contained in the PRMP. As occurred during in the RMP process, fine-scale planning requires data collection, consideration of alternatives, environmental assessment and public involvement.

Plan implementation involves the following topics:

- Adaptive Management
- Time Frames for Implementation
- Linking Broad-scale Decisions and Information to more detailed plans and actions
- Compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act
- Monitoring
- Evaluation
- Consultation, Coordination and Collaboration

9.2 ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

The PRMP would be implemented using adaptive management processes. Under adaptive management, decisions, plans and proposed activities are treated as working hypotheses rather than final solutions to management of resources and uses. For the purposes of this plan, adaptive management represents a process that tests, evaluates and adjusts the assumptions, objectives, actions, and subsequent on-the-ground results from the

implementation of PRMP decisions. Used effectively, adaptive management provides resource managers with the flexibility to respond quickly and effectively to changing resource and user conditions. Changes in management actions are based on site-specific resource monitoring and evaluation.

The intent of adaptive management is to allow future management actions, as applied through resource management guidelines, to fully incorporate the knowledge and experience gained up to that time from monitoring, evaluation and experimentation.

Guidelines assure that constraints established in the RMP are consistently applied when management methods and practices are used to meet plan objectives. Examples of guidelines are found in Appendix C (in this case livestock grazing guidelines to meet Land Health Standards). Guidelines would be developed for all programs and uses. Guidelines that already exist for many programs and uses would be adopted as is when reviews show them to be applicable to the Planning Area. New site-specific guidelines would also be developed as necessary.

The adaptive management process is a continuous cycle that includes the following four phases:

- **Planning:** Management guidelines, actions, and objectives are developed. Monitoring techniques and adjustment thresholds are designed based upon available information, past monitoring information and current scientific information.

- **Implementation:** Objectives, guidelines, actions and constraints developed and identified during planning processes at all scales are applied as on-the-ground management.

- **Monitoring:** Monitoring includes all efforts to document the current state of implementation, the resulting resource conditions as measured through indicators and the effectiveness of the implementation. Monitoring is designed to tier from existing data and techniques, be outcome based, technically feasible, affordable, and operationally attainable. Two types of monitoring occur:
  - **Implementation monitoring:** Were the decisions and actions developed during planning implemented?
  - **Effectiveness monitoring:** Did the implemented action result in a change in resource condition indicators? Did changes in the indicators exceed thresholds established for the achievement of the objectives?

When additional monitoring is required to fill information gaps, standardized monitoring techniques would be used where available before new techniques would be developed. Additional information on monitoring is discussed later in this section.

- **Evaluation:** Evaluation is the part of the process through which specific objectives, actions, monitoring thresholds, and even resource condition indicators may be modified to better meet the goals of the plan. Evaluation determines the needs for and time frames during which changes to planning, implementation and monitoring should occur.

The BLM staff associated with the NCA and supported by technical experts in the Winnemucca and Surprise Field Offices would be responsible for developing monitoring and adaptive management protocols and ensuring that documentation is sufficient to facilitate feedback into the adaptive management process. This team would also be responsible for ensuring that monitoring results and other new information is compiled and evaluated according to the two evaluation phases discussed above. Additional information on evaluation is discussed later in this section.

9.3 TIME FRAMES FOR IMPLEMENTATION

Implementation of decisions made through this planning process would occur in several phases. Although the use of the word "phase" implies sequential steps, some of the phases could be implemented concurrently. These phases include:

Pending/Ongoing: Generally, any ongoing, short-term activity would not be changed as a result of the RMP decisions. Short-term activities where National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis has been completed and decisions are pending would be screened to ensure there are no conflicts with the decisions in the Resource Management Plan prior to implementation.

Short-term: Actions where implementation would begin in the immediate future (i.e., within the first several years) are included in this category. These would include implementing off-road vehicle closures, designating primitive camping areas and initiating a public information program. The subsequent assessment and activity planning processes described below would also need to be developed and refined in the short term, including setting priorities for subsequent analysis and planning. The monitoring and adaptive management process would also need to be initiated, including establishing coordination efforts and priorities for monitoring and research programs.

Longer-Term: This phase includes actions that would need to be implemented over the planning horizon (up to 20 years). In addition to ongoing regulatory requirements, the major part of this effort would include detailed project and activity planning supported in the RMP but not specifically outlined. The monitoring and adaptive management strategy would continue to be implemented throughout the life of the plan, which could lead to changes in the plan through an amendment or revision process that considers information collected during implementation. This process is discussed in more detail in the sections following.

In the adaptive management process, evaluation of information collected could result in changes in time frames for implementation. Data could indicate a need to accelerate a protective management action or an action could be delayed because impacts are less than originally anticipated.

9.4 LINKING BROAD-SCALE DECISIONS TO MORE DETAILED PLANS AND ACTIONS

The Proposed RMP contains general direction and context for the entire planning area and makes decisions on specific actions for some issues (e.g., route designations). Still, many management actions necessary to achieve broad-scale objectives (e.g., developing an effective visitor information program) would require further planning and additional decisions. This additional planning would:

- Validate, refine or add-to information concerning current and historical resource conditions;
- Address issues not appropriately addressed at the broad scale;
- Prioritize implementation actions consistent with achievement of management goals and objectives;
- Guide the type, location and sequence of appropriate management activities; and
- Identify specific monitoring and research needs.

The additional detailed plans and actions would "step-down" broad-scale objectives and decisions in the plan to site-specific actions. This step-down process would be designed to ensure that broad-scale decisions are viewed within the context of site-specific resources and uses, while the site-specific decisions would be designed to be consistent with broad-scale goals and objectives.

Where Proposed RMP decisions at the broader level would not adequately provide the detail needed to manage resources and uses, activity plans could be used to supplement the Proposed RMP (i.e., planning specific to a particular resource program such as a Fire Management Plan or a Special Recreation Management Plan). Activity planning would be an intermediate step between the broad guidance of the RMP and the specific details of project development. These plans fill a need to provide specific program guidance, while allowing management the flexibility to adjust over the life of the RMP without requiring an RMP amendment.

Detailed plans and actions would be associated with implementation of a single on-the-ground project such as development of a campground or maintenance of a road. Project plans would be consistent with achieving the objectives of the PRMP.

Under the hierarchy of analysis and planning outlined above, the site-specific scale of analysis acts as a safety net for those issues overlooked or appropriately excluded at broader scales and provides site-specific information for determining effects. This level of analysis has been used extensively since the inception of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and has been proven successful at identifying and addressing local issues and concerns.

9.5 COMPLIANCE WITH THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

The Proposed RMP includes objectives and decisions for which compliance with NEPA is being completed in this FEIS. Additional planning at the project or activity plan level would require additional NEPA analysis in most cases. The BLM would continue to conduct site-specific inventories and perform appropriate level NEPA analyses as part of the planning and decision-making processes described above. Management changes resulting from the adaptive management process would also usually require NEPA analysis. Changes beyond the scope of the land use plan that are deemed desirable in the adaptive management process, could result in a plan amendment. Both the NEPA and future planning efforts at all scales would include public involvement.

9.6 MONITORING

Monitoring would determine whether or not planning objectives were being met and insure that BLM met the commitments made in the plan. The information developed through monitoring would feed the evaluation process that could alter decisions or the timing of decisions, change implementation or maintain current management direction.

The key step in developing a monitoring strategy is to define the questions that need to be answered in order to evaluate the attainment of broad-scale management goals and objectives in the Proposed RMP. These questions would be used to focus monitoring on appropriate issues and avoid gathering irrelevant information; focused monitoring also helps keep costs within agency budgets.

The first step would be to select key monitoring elements and indicators that can be effectively sampled and can provide desired data at a reasonable cost. An example of such indicators is provided in Table 9-1. A standard set of core data elements would be collected. Core data, including data necessary to evaluate achievement of the applicable Land Health Standards, are the minimum set of variables to be collected at all scales. Standardized measurement and reporting protocols would be determined because the need for consistency is essential. Where possible, monitoring protocols would be designed to integrate existing monitoring efforts and would address multiple questions. Also, the design would have the flexibility to add data elements required to answer new questions/objectives raised during subsequent site-specific planning.

Determining the specific monitoring approach for any question requires knowledge of detailed information on existing conditions. For example, trend assessment first requires gathering baseline or status information. Just a few of the projects that have occurred or would be anticipated during implementation RMP include: Landscape scale vegetation assessments; overviews for paleontology, history and archaeology; NCA-wide surveys for special status species; collection of meteorological data at weather stations; and visitor use inventories. Data from these projects would be vital to monitoring trends. A monitoring strategy must also identify the techniques needed to acquire a complete picture of the structure and pattern of a resource (i.e., remote sensing, sample-based studies, modeling).

A monitoring system requires the development and use of indicators and thresholds based on guidelines. Thresholds are measurable indicators of when a change in management needs to be made. For example, the specific amount of resource impacts that would be tolerated before a campsite would be closed to public use and rehabilitated is a threshold. The development of indicators and thresholds would occur during the early part of plan implementation. Until these measures are in place, evaluations could not be completed. Indicators and thresholds would be periodically evaluated to assure that they remain appropriate for the Planning Area.

Table 9-1. Monitoring Indicators

Major Uses and Resources	Indicators to be Monitored
Land Health	- Amount of Ground Cover - Evidence of Erosion - Vegetation Composition, Vigor and Structure - Riparian Functional Condition - Achievement of Water Quality Standards - Population and Habitat Diversity and Viability - Special Status Species Viability - Levels of Invasive Species
Transportation	- Road Condition - Numbers of Vehicle Accidents - Numbers of Search and Rescue Incidents - Erosion/Resource Damage Associated with Roads
OHV Use	- Occurrences of New Tracks - Condition of Playa Surface - Changes in Dune Formation and Condition
Cultural Resources	- Evidence of Looting/Vandalism - Changes in Site Integrity - Erosion of Trail Traces - Unauthorized Use of Trails
Paleontological	- Evidence of Looting/Vandalism - Changes in Site Integrity
Wilderness Values	- See Land Health Indicators - Changes in Naturalness - Numbers of Encounters with Other Visitors - Motorized Trespass - Boundary Marking - Number of Wilderness Violations
ACECs	- See Land Health Indicators - See Cultural Resources Indicators
Vegetation	- See Land Health Indicators
Livestock Grazing	- See Land Health Indicators
Wild Horses & Burros	- See Land Health Indicators - Population Levels - Demographics - Herd Health
Wildland Fire	- Fuel Characteristics - Burn Area Recovery - Rehabilitation Success
Fish & Wildlife	- Population Numbers/Trends - Impacts to Habitat
Special Status Species	- See Land Health Indicators
Visual Resources	- Changes in Visual Quality - Changes to Visual Intrusions/Contrast - Uses comply with VRM Class
Water Resources	- See Land Health Indicators
Lands & Realty	- Compliance with Stipulations - Numbers of Trespass Incidents - Access to Public Lands

Table 9-1. Monitoring Indicators

Major Uses and Resources	Indicators to be Monitored
Mineral Resource Uses	- Compliance with Stipulations
Soils	- See Land Health Indicators
Recreation	- Site and Trail Encounters - Surface Permeability - Evidence of Human Waste - Vandalism - Area of Impact - SRP Stipulation Requirements
Public Information/ Visitor Services	- Brochure Distribution - Adequacy of Information - Visitor Satisfaction - Demand for Facilities - Numbers of Search and Rescue Incidents - Numbers of Law Enforcement Incidents

9.7 EVALUATION

Evaluation is the process that reviews plan and resource condition indicators to see whether management goals and objectives are being met and determine whether management direction is sound. Evaluation examines management actions to determine whether they are consistent with thresholds established for the achievement of the objectives. If they are not, evaluation identifies the reasons. The conclusions are then used to make recommendations on whether to continue current management guidelines, to make changes in management practices to meet plan goals and objectives, or to amend the plan objectives or decision to better meet the capabilities of the land and the intent of the legislation.

Reviews of the evaluation process would be periodically scheduled to ensure that:

- Appropriate teams are assembled to conduct evaluations.
- Monitoring data is gathered sufficiently in advance to be used effectively in the evaluation process.
- Evaluations are conducted at intervals that allow for adjustments to be made in management direction before crises develop.

Evaluations made too frequently will not detect changes in ecosystems because cost-effective monitoring systems cannot detect changes at this scale. On the other hand, if ecosystem management evaluations are not conducted or are delayed for too long, irreversible changes may take place without detection. To prevent this problem, two periodic management evaluations are proposed. The first is a project implementation evaluation that would be conducted every two years to compare the expected outcomes of projects with the actual results. This evaluation would ensure that monitoring results are incorporated into ongoing assessments and planning. The second is a broad-scale evaluation that would be conducted approximately every five to ten years to assess the progress toward achievement of broad-scale objectives and desired future conditions.

The evaluation process, scientific research and monitoring efforts will generate new information that needs to be considered in future

management actions. New information could result in any of the following:

- Concluding that management actions are moving resources toward the broad-scale or site-specific objectives. In this case, management actions are affirmed and may not need to be adjusted.
- Concluding that further research needs to be initiated or that actions must be adjusted to more efficiently achieve objectives of the Plan. If new information or research demonstrates better ways to achieve plan objectives, changes in activity planning and project implementation could be made. This kind of "plan maintenance" could require NEPA analysis depending upon the nature of the management changes.
- Concluding that broad-scale objectives should be altered based on new information. If the new information indicates that plan objectives should be reconsidered, a plan amendment could be required that would reexamine desired future conditions and ways to reach those conditions.

The credibility of an adaptive management process rests in part on the routine application of an outside check on the use of technical and scientific information, including monitoring. Independent reviews can provide verification that plans, evaluations and changes in management strategy are consistent with current scientific concepts. The Nevada and California BLM state offices and the community of scientific experts available outside the Bureau would conduct these reviews.

9.8 CONSULTATION, COORDINATION, AND COLLABORATION

This plan has been prepared in close coordination and collaboration with other federal agencies, State, local and Tribal governments, and other interested parties. Collaborative approaches to implementation are necessary to assure success. While the BLM retains the responsibility and authority for land management decisions, these decisions are more meaningful, effective and enduring if made in a collaborative and open process. Therefore, close working relationships among management and regulatory agencies need to be developed and maintained. In addition, others outside of the BLM (e.g., State and local agencies, universities, volunteers) should be involved in subsequent analysis, monitoring, evaluation, research, and adaptive management processes.

A major component that would be used to assure that management decisions are made in a collaborative manner would be the continuing involvement of two BLM Resource Advisory Councils (RACs). The ability of a subgroup formed by the RACs to provide high quality input into the planning process was essential to the timely completion of the RMP. Continuing opportunities for public participation could include, among other things:

- Regular collaboration with a RAC sanctioned group similar to the planning subgroup as discussed in Chapter 7.4
- Volunteer partnerships or assistance agreement with other agencies to complete assessments, establish baseline data, monitor, and recommend management actions as a result of these processes
- Working groups, agreements and memorandums of understanding with State and Tribal governments

9.9 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER AGENCY PLANS

Local, State, other federal agencies, and Indian Tribes in the immediate region routinely prepare plans that establish goals and direction for land use, economic development or resource management within their jurisdictions. Many of these plans bear directly on or are significantly affected by BLM plans for managing public lands. During implementation of this plan BLM would coordinate and consult with such agencies and Tribes to assure consistency with other approved plans to the extent that they are determined consistent with federal laws, regulations, and policies. The principles of community-based planning would be employed where timing, mutual interest and the availability of resources are appropriate to address economic, ecologic and land use issues of mutual concern.

This Page Intentionally Left Blank